



Maryland Department of Budget & Management

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Questions and Answers #2 to Request for Proposals (RFP) Internet Service Provider (ISP) Project No. 050R4800181

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Received the following questions by e-mail, which are answered for all offerors to the referenced RFP. The numerical sequencing begins at question #5 since questions up to #4 were answered in Q&A #1.

5. **Question:** Attached is a table listing numerous bandwidths (in gray) [not included in this Q&A] in the State's pricing tables that we do not offer for Dedicated IP. Can you please clarify if the bandwidths provided in the second column will fulfill the State's requirement?
Answer: Any bandwidth offered equal or greater than those listed in RFP, Attachment F, would meet the State's requirements. The listed bandwidths are what the State expects an offeror to price; each category of bandwidth service level must be priced with a unit monthly service charge. The State will pay the successful contractor only at the rate for the bandwidth specified in a PO. If an offeror were to offer a higher bandwidth than that required in each category, it would be an offeror's prerogative to do so. However, please remember that the prices in Attachment F are the prices that will be evaluated. So if higher prices are proposed by an offeror on the basis that the offeror is providing a higher bandwidth than the minimum for the category, those higher prices will be compared to the prices each other offeror has submitted for the bandwidth category, possibly for bandwidths only at the minimum required level.
6. **Question:** Because we peer with over 50 networks and more than 50% of our traffic is delivered via our own network or through private peering with other Tier 1 providers, what is the purpose of requiring a national fiber optic backbone [RFP Section 2.1.1.5]? The State's stated desire is to be able to consistently deliver traffic efficiently throughout the United States. If you review traceroutes of national providers, you will find that, due to peering relationships, Internet traffic between Tier 1 carriers is often routed to distant cities where the two carriers happen to have available capacity to pass traffic. This increased latency actually reduces the ability to deliver traffic consistently. By working with a large regional provider, such as our company, the State of Maryland would be provided with the fastest connection directly to the destination Tier 1 network (as opposed to, for example, an Annapolis end user trying to reach the Washington Post's website and being routed through New York because that is where the two Tier 1s happen to interconnect).

Answer: In drafting specifications, the State considered how to ensure that the successful contractor would have the experience and its national fiber optic backbones the size and geographic footprint to meet State needs and also to ensure that State Internet connections are not at risk in terms of reliability and availability. The minimum qualifications and specifications of the RFP are how the State has determined to fulfill and address those needs. In order to satisfy those needs, the minimum qualification identified in RFP Sec 2.1.1.5 must be an organic capability of the offeror itself. The offeror may not satisfy this requirement by contracting with a subcontractor with this capability.

7. **Question:** We subcontract our local loop delivery to multiple carriers who have greater than OC12 national backbones. In addition, we subcontract some of our peering (i.e. paid peering) with other Tier 1 carriers. Do these subcontractors allow our company to meet the requirements of RFP Section 2.1.1.5?

Answer: No, the capability must be organic to the offeror as stated in the RFP Section 2.1.1.5.

8. **Question:** From Section 4.5.3.1 c.), ISP Monthly Services, the State has asked for UNIT Monthly Service Charges for each required service level, while providing an all inclusive price including access, surcharges and taxes. Is it assumed by the State that the connection address per LATA from the State's provided pricing sheet (attachment F) is simply used as an example for the State's evaluation of all inclusive pricing from that particular address?

Answer: The address is an example. The State's intent is for offerors to submit a single, postalized price for service to any location within the LATA. The State will publish an amendment to clarify this point.

9. **Question:** From the Attachment F Price Proposal Form, why has the State given a much higher evaluation factor (.20) for the 45Mb Service Level?

Answer: It is the most used bandwidth ordered by the State.

10. **Question:** We do not believe that the services contemplated by this RFP are capable of being subcontracted out by the vendor [RFP Section 1.25]. By their very nature, the State's requirements for Tier 1 Internet Access and for Web Hosting must be met directly by a single internet service provider prime contractor; the scope of work contemplated by the RFP does not have any other related or inclusive tasks that could be subcontracted by the internet service provider prime to any other third parties. In light of the background provided above, will the State delete the Subcontract Goal for purposes of this RFP or, alternatively, advise all vendors of the State's vision of how the required services can be delivered, in whole or in part, by subcontractors?

Answer: The goal of 1% is deemed achievable via a prime establishing a relationship with a Certified MBE sub that could perform the Web Hosting portion of the contract. If after award, unforeseen circumstances preclude achieving the goal, COMAR 21.11.03.11 has a waiver procedure that could be exercised; however, the Contractor must make a good faith effort to achieve the goal.

Date Issued: February 18, 2004

By _____ <signed> _____
Norman H. Grinnell
Procurement Officer